

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

My name is Sidney F. Van Zandt, I live at 3 Front St., P.O. Box 9173, Groton, CT 06340

I wish to go on record as **opposing the major cuts to the environment** that are in the governor's budget, namely cutting state parks' funding, The Community Investment Act, and a change in the status of the Council on Environmental Quality.

I would like to present a statement that was in the 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, page 106 (Item 12.8):

*"Significant natural resources exist throughout the region. While these resources pose limitations to development, it is imperative that these resources be protected. Failure to meet this challenge will create significant impacts on every facet of economic growth and quality of life within southeastern Connecticut."*

On page 63, the Regional Council of Governments said the *"region's natural resources especially potable water must be seriously considered in making land use recommendations at the local level. Otherwise, at some point in the future, desirable economic development opportunities will be unavailable."*

There is a great need to purchase and protect lands in the Long Island Sound watershed. Open space funds have been critically important to municipalities and land trusts who together are trying to protect these lands. The western end of the sound is already classified as a "dead zone." In order to protect the eastern portion of Long Island Sound, aid is badly needed to save the land that, if developed, will increase stormwater runoff into a waterway that brings billions of dollars into the state's coffers. Think of the fishing industry and the boating/yachting industry and the marinas holding the vessels.

Our state park system, another one of Connecticut's jewels, contributes significantly to economic development either directly or indirectly. Bluff Point and Haley Farm State Parks combined add up to 1000+ acres of saved land on our coast. About 400,000 people visited those parks in 2013. Jonathan Lincoln, the superintendent of the Fort Griswold Management Unit, administered 18 parks including Fort Trumbull, Barn Island, Bluff Point and Haley Farm State Parks. He retired a few months ago and there has been no replacement. Letting those parks languish will only cost more in the long run in repairs. Please do not make cuts to those funds.

I also feel that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), of which I was a member in the 1970's, plays a vital role in reviewing projects and events all over the state. Many hearings explored issues of interest and helpful to both state organizations as well as citizens. The cost of this program is small, but the benefits are substantial.

Thank you for your time. I represent the Groton Open Space Association in Groton with nearly 700 members. We are responsible for helping to save Bluff Point and Haley Farm State Parks, as well as four large parcels in the Long Island Sound watershed made possible in part by grants from the Community Investment Act. Again, many nonprofit land trusts and municipalities rely on Connecticut DEEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant program, funded largely by the CIA, to leverage state funds with matching funds. These towns and land trusts help fulfill, in a cost effective manner, the state's mission to protect 21% of land in Connecticut. Please reinstate those funds.